

THE
EPISTLE OF PSENOSIRIS

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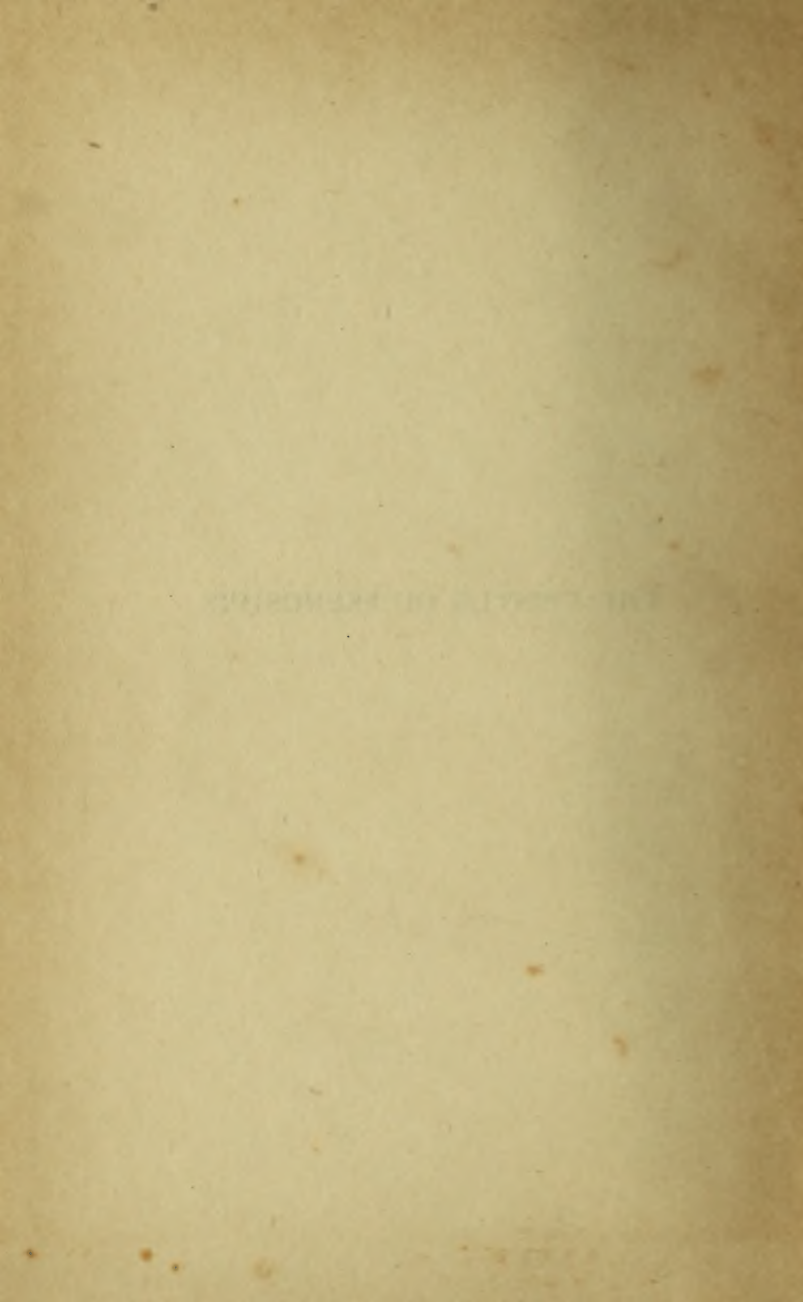
A. DEISSMANN

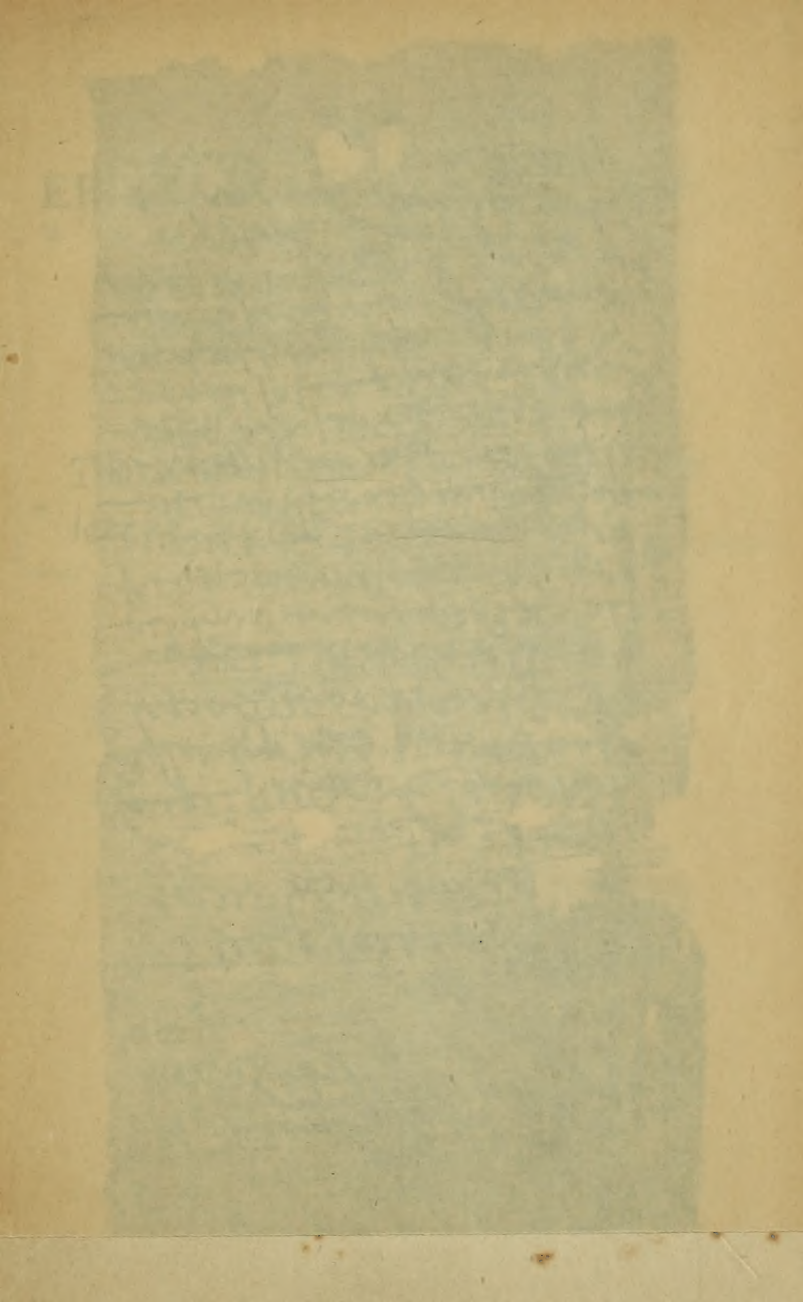
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THE EPISTLE OF PSENOSIRIS





Fragment of a papyrus scroll with Greek text, showing significant wear and damage. The text is written in a cursive hand and is partially obscured by holes and tears in the material.

Fragment of a papyrus scroll with Greek text, showing significant wear and damage. The text is written in a cursive hand and is partially obscured by holes and tears in the material.

THE
EPISTLE OF PSENOSIRIS

An Original Document from the
Diocletian Persecution

(PAPYRUS 713 BRIT. MUS.)

*The second oldest original Christian
letter so far discovered.*

Edited and Explained

BY

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PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF HEIDELBERG

WITH A PLATE

LONDON
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1902

CRISTIE OF RENOVATION

AN ORIGINAL NOVEL IN THE
DICKENSIAN MANNER

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE CRISTIE OF RENOVATION"

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY
JOHN WATKINS, 15, N. B. ST. MARK'S PLACE, E.C. 4.

1894

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1894

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To

BERNARD P. GRENFELL

AND

ARTHUR S. HUNT,

THE PIONEERS.



INTRODUCTION

THE valuable papyrus-leaf to which I invite attention in the following pages was first read and published by Grenfell and Hunt,¹ the English papyrologists whose labours have won such high appreciation. It was known to me four years ago, and I looked upon it then as a particularly interesting early-Christian leaf, but I did not understand its true nature until July of last year (1901). With a view to preparing an edition of the early-Christian leaves of our Heidelberg papyrus collection, I had to apply myself with special zeal to the

¹ *Greek Papyri*, Series II., New Classical Fragments and other Greek and Latin Papyri, edited by Bernard P. Grenfell . . . and Arthur S. Hunt, Oxford, 1897, p. 115*f*. In this publication the leaf is numbered 73.

Greek letters of the early-Christian period emanating from Egypt, as we, too, possess an early-Christian letter. Unfortunately, our letter is not in the best state of preservation. Still, for the most part it can be read, and its gaps may perhaps be partly filled by the help of the fixed phrases which are found to prevail in the letters of other papyri. On this occasion, then, I read once more the British Museum Papyrus 713, but this time with a new vision. Of course, as was only to be expected, the characters which I read in the copy supplied by Grenfell and Hunt were not found to be different from those detected by the first decipherers; but I attached a new value to one single letter. It was in this way: out of the small '*p*' of the word '*politiken*,' in line 9, I made a large one, with the result that a Christian woman, Politike, figured in the middle of the letter.

To show that this alteration is warranted; that by this change, to all appearance so trivial, the character of the whole leaf has

been quite transformed ; and that on account of this large 'P' our papyrus becomes a precious relic from an epoch in our faith that was so fruitful in trials and tribulations—this is the task I have set myself in the following pages.

I am giving my first thought to the share I can claim as my own in the present work. I have to thank, however, Mr. Frederic G. Kenyon and Mr. Warner, of the British Museum, for the photograph of the papyrus ; Mr. Kenyon also for collating the reading with the original. My colleague, Herr Wilcken, of Würzburg, besides, has been of great service for the reading. I have also discussed the text with him and my colleague, Herr Carl Schmidt, on the occasion of a lecture by Wilcken on the Heidelberg papyrus. For further information I am under obligation to Mr. B. P. Grenfell, of Oxford, and to the travelling secretary of the Soudan Pioneer Mission, Herr Kumm, at present in Jena. My friend Alfred von

Domaszewski has added to the evidence for the name ' Politike ' from his wide knowledge of inscriptions, and Herr Dr. Gustav Adolf Gerhard has on the spot contributed welcome analogies for the additions supplied by me for the lines at the end of the papyrus.

A. D.

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THE EPISTLE OF PSENOSIRIS

I

SOURCE OF THE PAPYRUS

AT the beginning of the ninetieth year of the last century a considerable number of papyrus leaves, which had been discovered in the Great Oasis (now called El-Khargeh) of the Libyan Desert, came into the market.¹ Who unearthed them I am unable to say, but from this very dearth of accurate information we are warranted in concluding that we have to do with an accidental 'find,' and it is as good as certain that the papyri which now find a

¹ I derive this information from Grenfell and Hunt, *Greek Papyri*, Series II., p. 104.

home in different places are one and all to be traced back to that discovery. Eleven of these leaves now belong to the British Museum, London. They are those published by Grenfell and Hunt in *Greek Papyri*, Series II., as Nos. 68-78. Besides these, the British Museum contains, as Kenyon informs me in a written communication (October 29, 1901), no papyri from the Great Oasis. Professor A. H. Sayce purchased for himself some other fragments in the winter of 1893-94. The six among them that were in the best state of preservation he published immediately;¹ the rest, on account of their serious mutilation, he did not consider worth publishing. A few other small fragments are in the possession (according to a post-card of October 27, 1901) of Grenfell, but he attributes to them no great importance. Furthermore, it is not impossible that some fragments of the papyrus 'find' from the Great Oasis have found their way into other collections.

¹ *Revue des Études Grecques*, vii. (1894), pp. 300-304. Sayce's readings can now be improved upon.

The locality to which these papyri collectively belong, to judge by their contents, and in whose ruins, moreover, they were found, has been misunderstood by Sayce. He inferred from the contents that the leaves must have been discovered in El-Kousiyyet,¹ the ancient *Cusæ*; he has, therefore, referred the Kysis which occurs several times in his fragments to *Cusæ*. But the London fragments show beyond doubt that Kysis is a place in the Great Oasis—the same place, in fact, that was already known to us from the inscription of Marcus Rutilius Lupus, Prefect of Egypt, of the year 116 A.D.² This inscription is found upon the architrave of the entrance-door of an ancient temple in the place called Dûsh el-Ḳal'a, in the Great

¹ The Fellah-town El-Ḳusiye is situated on the western bank of the Nile, inland between the railway-stations Dêrût esh-Sherif and Montfalût. More precise details are to be found in K. Baedeker, *Ägypten*, Zweiter Theil: Ober-Ägypten und Nubien bis zum zweiten Katarakt; Leipzig, 1891, p. 45 (= *Upper Egypt*, p. 29).

² *Corpus Inscriptionum Græcarum*, iii. 4948. Kysis is also mentioned (ἐνὶ Κύσι) in the metrical inscription, No. 4949 of the same collection. No other mentions of the place Kysis are known to me.

Oasis, and shows beyond doubt that Dûsh el-Ḳal'a is the ancient Kysis. Kysis (= Dûsh el-Ḳal'a) is situated quite in the south of the oasis, on the caravan-road to Dârfûr, south-east of Bêrys.¹

¹ Baedeker, *Ober-Ägypten*, p. 389: 'Between Bêrys and Maks, about half-way, but somewhat eastward of the road, lies the temple of Dûsh el-Ḳal'a.' The maps of the Great Oasis are not in perfect agreement. I have compared the following: F. Cailliaud, *Voyage à l'Oasis de Thèbes et dans les déserts situés à l'orient et à l'occident de la Thèbaïde, fait pendant les années 1815, 1816, 1817 et 1818*, Paris, 1821, plate x., p. 13; G. A. Hoskins, *Visit to the Great Oasis of the Libyan Desert*, London, 1837, after p. xvi; G. Schweinfurth, *Notizen zur Kenntniss der Oase el-Chargeh*, i., *Altertümer*, Petermann's *Mittheilungen*, xxi. (1875), p. 384 ff. (the maps are plates xi. and xix. of this volume); G. Rohlfs, *Drei Monate in der libyschen Wüste*, Cassel, 1875, at the end of the book (= plate xi. in Petermann's *Mittheilungen*, 1875); the maps in H. Brugsch-Bey, *Reise nach der Grossen Oase el-Khargeh in der libyschen Wüste*, Leipzig, 1878 (plate i. gives only the chief town of the oasis with its surroundings). Maps which can be easily obtained, and are satisfactory for the understanding of our papyrus, are those of H. Kiepert, *Ägypten und Palästina* (maps to illustrate ancient history, iii.), and the maps supplied in the prospectus 'Ägypten und der Nil,' issued by Cook's Tourists' Agency for 1901-2. T. Schottenfels and Co., Frankfurt a. M., and Cook and Son, Ludgate

What Sayce had already seen from a study of his few fragments has been confirmed by the leaves in the British Museum, which are more numerous and in a better state of preservation ; with quite unimportant exceptions, the Papyri of Kysis relate to the grave-diggers' guild of that place. The conjecture is inevitably forced upon us that in the Kysis Papyri we have before us in the main the remainder of the archives of the grave-diggers' guild.

The leaf under consideration also belongs to the Kysis Papyri ; in it also the grave-diggers fill an important rôle. As a relic, then, from the society-chest of the grave-diggers of Kysis in the Great Oasis we may take it in hand.

Circus, London, send this prospectus gratis to anyone interested. Pictures of the ancient ruins of Kysis (= Dûsh el-Ḳal'a) will be found in Cailliaud, plates xi., xii., xiii., and in Hoskins, plates xiii., xiv. The ancient notices of the Great Oasis have been collected by E. Böcking in his edition of *Notitia Dignitatum*, i., Bonn, 1839, pp. 326 ff.; and by H. Gelzer in his edition of *Georgius Cyprius*, Leipsic, 1890, pp. 139 ff.

II

THE TEXT

THE leaf reproduced here in facsimile in its original size measures 21.59×8.255 cm. (= about $8\frac{1}{3} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ inches). It is written on both sides. The front side, which is shown in the facsimile, bears the text of a letter ; the other side, which, unfortunately, could not be photographed,¹ the address. In several places the papyrus shows lacunæ. I need not enter into details regarding the character of the script, as it can be seen at a glance from the facsimile.

In the reading of the text there had to be taken into account :

¹ 'The reverse side being a very dark brown renders it quite impossible to photograph with any kind of colour-plate' (Communication from the photographer, E. Dossetter, London, W., September 30, 1901).

For the *recto* :

1. The first reading from the original by Grenfell and Hunt (G.H.) ;
2. Kenyon's collation of this reading with the original (K.) ;
3. Wilcken's reading from the photograph (W.) ;
4. My own reading from the photograph.

For the *verso* :

1. The first reading from the original by Grenfell and Hunt (G.H.) ;
2. Kenyon's collation of this reading with the original (K.).

I now give, to begin with, the transcription of the text as it appears ; the division of words, which is in several places evidently intentional on the part of the writer, has been retained. Indistinct letters are indicated by points below, missing letters by points within square brackets.

Recto.

ψενοσιρει πρεσβ[...]¹ρω απολλωνι
 πρεσβυτερωγαγαπητωαδελφω
 ενκω — χαιρειν
 πρωτωνολωνπολλασεασπα
 5 ζομαικαιτουσπαρασοιπαντας
 αδελφουσ εν θω — γινωσκειν
 σεθελωαδελφεοτιοινεκρο
 ταφοιενηνοχασινενθαδε
 ειστοεσωτηνπολιτικηντην
 10 πεμφθεισανεισοασινυποτησ
 ηγεμονιας και[.]αυτηνπα
 ραδεδωκατοιςκαλοιςκαιπι
 στοιζεξαυτηςτωννεκροτα
 φωνειωτηρησινεστανελ
 15 θηνουϊοσαυτησνειλοσκαι

1 ψενοσιρει (W.), ψενοσιρι (G.H.). απολλωνι (G.H.),
 απολλωνι[ω] (W.), απολλωνι (K.). 'There is no trace
 of an ω after Απολλωνι in Pap. 713 on either recto or
 verso. At the same time one cannot be *quite* certain
 that it was not written, since on the *recto* there is very
 little space between the ι and the edge of the papyrus,
 and on the *verso* much of the ink has disappeared. My
 own opinion, however, is that no ω was written in either
 place' (K.).

4 The first half of the line is not at all clear in the
 photograph. ασπα (W.), ασπαζ (G.H.).

5 ζομαι (W.), ομαι (G.H.).

6 α[δ]ελφουσ (G.H.).

11 και ταυτην (G.H.).

13 εξαυτης (W.), εξαυτων (G.H.).

οτανελθουσυνθεωμαρτυρη
 σισοιπεριωναντηνπεποι
 ηκασιν δι[.]λω[.]ον[.]μοι
 κ.[...]περιωνθελεισενταν
 θα ηδεωσποιουντι

20

ερρωσθαισεευχομαι
 ενκῶ θῶ

21

Verso.

απολλωνι x παραψενοσιριο[.]
 πρεσβυτερω x πρεσβυτερουεν κῶ

Text of *verso* according to G.H.

‘The writing on the *verso* is very indistinct, but I think the reading of Grenfell and Hunt

18 δι. λω[.]ο ι (G.H.). ‘The remains at the end of the line are quite consistent with μοι’ (K.).

19 κ.[...]περι (W.), [...]κυ. και[.]περι (G.H.), κ.[...]περι (K.). ‘There is no trace of any letter before κ (which, moreover, stands exactly below the first letter in the preceding line); nor is there room for και, or any trace of it, in the papyrus. The second letter, of which part remains, may be υ’ (K.).

Below the last line are to be seen, as between lines 20 and 21, traces of writing. ‘The marks of ink below the last line on the *recto* are not words, but probably mere blottings, as you suggest’ (K.).

is probably right' (K.). See also K.'s remarks on line 1 of the *recto* and the note on p. 6.

Although two lines have been seriously damaged, we are enabled to restore this text with confidence. Justification for the supplements in lines 18 and 19 will be given in the explanation of the text. The orthographic and other peculiarities being allowed to stand, but with division of words, accentuation, and punctuation, the text reads as follows :

Ψενοσίρει πρεσβ[υτέ]ρω Ἀπόλλωνι
 πρεσβυτέρω ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ
 ἐν Κ(υρί)ῳ χαίρειν.
 πρὸ τῶν ὅλων πολλά σε ἀσπάζομαι καὶ τοὺς παρὰ σοὶ πάντας
 5 ἀδελφοὺς ἐν Θ(ε)ῷ . γινώσκειν σε θέλω, ἀδελφέ, ὅτι οἱ νεκροτάφοι ἐννηόχασιν ἐνθάδε
 εἰς τὸ ἔσω τὴν Πολιτικὴν τὴν
 10 πεμφθείσαν εἰς Ὁασιν ὑπὸ τῆς ἡγεμονίας . καὶ [τ]αύτην παρὰ δέδωκα τοῖς καλοῖς καὶ πιστοῖς ἐξαυτῆς τῶν νεκροτάφων
 15 εἰς τήρησιν, ἔστ' ἂν ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῆς Νεῖλος, καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ σὺν θεῷ, μαρτυρή-

σι σοι περὶ ὧν αὐτὴν πεποι-
 ήκασιν . δ[ή]λω[σ]ον [δέ] μοι
 κ[αὶ σὺ] περὶ ὧν θέλεις ἐνταῦ-
 θα ἡδέως ποιοῦντι.

20

ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχομαι
 ἐν K(υρί)ω Θ(ε)ῶ.

On the *verso* the address :

Ἀπόλλωνι × παρὰ Ψενοσίριο[s]
 πρεσβυτέρω × πρεσβυτέρον ἐν K(υρί)ω.

TRANSLATION.

From Psenosiris the Presbyter to Apollon
 the Presbyter, his beloved brother
 in the Lord, Greeting !

Above all I salute thee often-
 times, and all the brethren that are
 with thee in God. I would have thee
 know, brother, that the grave-diggers
 here into the inner part
 have brought Politike, who was
 sent into the Oasis by the
 government. And her have I
 forthwith given over to the care of
 the good and faithful among
 the grave-diggers, until that
 her son Neilos be come. And
 when he hath come with God,
 he will bear thee witness of
 all that they have done to

her. Do thou also on thy part
make known to me what thou dost wish
done here. I will do it gladly.

I wish thee welfare
in the Lord God.

On the *verso* the address :

To Apollon × from Psenosiris
the Presbyter × the Presbyter in the Lord.

*Paul probably put the address
on the back also.*

III

EXPLANATION

THE papyrus undoubtedly contains the letter of one Christian presbyter to another. It is true that the name 'Jesus Christ,' or the word 'Christian,' does not occur; the letter was perhaps intentionally framed in such a way that the non-Christian reader into whose hands it might chance to fall would not be able at the first glance to detect in it anything Christian. The proper names are not specifically Christian, and there were presbyters in heathen Egypt ages ago, just as the name 'brother' was also in common use in remote times. The very formulæ 'in the Lord' and 'in God,' which seem to us the most certain indications of the origin of the ancient leaf, need not really surprise us when

they are found in a land in which it was the general custom to mention the Lord Serapis by name in the first lines of a letter, and to assure the receiver of the letter of intercession to this god. It is not possible, however, seriously to question the Christian character of the letter, and the first editors so interpreted it as a matter of course.

The writer of the letter is a presbyter named Psenosiris (line 1 and *verso*). The name is early Egyptian, 'Son of Osiris,' and occurs also elsewhere¹ as a Christian name. As a matter of fact, the old heathen names not infrequently reappeared as names of Christians.

The term *presbyteros*, which occurs more than once (lines 1, 2, and *verso*), is certainly the Christian title. The use of the word with proper names, which is by no means rare in the papyri, to distinguish between an elder and a younger bearer of the same name, does not concern us here.

¹ W. Pape, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, 3ii., Brunswick, 1863-1870, calls attention to a bishop of this name in Socr., *Eccl. Hist.*, ii. 28₁₃. Cp. n. 2, p. 25.

Christian presbyters are also mentioned in a papyrus letter of the fourth century A.D.,¹ belonging to Trinity College, Dublin, as Grenfell and Hunt have already pointed out. The naturalization of the term 'presbyter' in its Christian sense would be particularly easy in Egypt, since from the time of the Ptolemies the technical title *presbyteroi* was borne there, as the inscriptions and papyri show,² not only by the holders of a municipal office, but also by certain priests. The term 'brother,' which appears more than once on the leaf we are considering (lines 2, 6, 7), could be accounted for in the same way; the very members of a guild whose duty it was to take part in the ceremonies required in connection with the embalming of bodies were styled *Brothers*.³

¹ Bernard P. Grenfell, *An Alexandrian Erotic Fragment and other Greek Papyri, chiefly Ptolemaic*, Oxford, 1896, No. 53.

² The evidence is to be found in Deissmann, *Bibelstudien*, Marburg, 1895, p. 153 f., and *Neue Bibelstudien*, 1897, p. 60 ff. (= *Bible Studies*, Edinburgh, 1901, pp. 154 f. and 233 ff.).

³ The evidence is to be found in *Bibelstudien*, pp. 140 and 82 f. (= *Bible Studies*, pp. 142 and 87 f.).

This consideration is not without some practical interest; the leaf we are considering speaks of Christian members of a grave-diggers' guild. The idea at once suggests itself that the home of an ancient fellowship here again had proved excellent soil for the growth of the new faith.

The recipient of the letter is a presbyter named Apollon.¹ On reading the first two words of the prescript to the letter,² we might indeed suppose Psenosiris to have been the person addressed, his name appearing first, as it does, in the dative; but it was regarded as an act of special courtesy, and in communicating with people in a higher position was evidently customary, to put the name of

¹ Wilcken suggests an ω after $\alpha\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omega\nu\iota$; in that case the name would be $\text{'}\text{Α}\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\acute{\omega}\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$. On this conjecture see below, p. 42 f.

² The first lines must be read thus, and not as the *address*. It is a widespread practice amongst commentators on the Epistles of Paul to describe the first lines (of an epistle) as the *address*. But the address was placed, as our leaf—in addition to many other papyrus letters—shows, on the back (or on what served as a wrapper) of the letter. The address is unfortunately no more preserved in the Epistles of Paul than the date.

the person addressed¹ first. In the case under consideration, however, it seems to be due merely to a slip of the pen on the part of the honest Psenosiris, who in his zeal evidently thinks more of the person addressed than of himself. We are not disposed to blame him for the slip; it heightens the fresh *naïveté* of the whole leaf.

Psenosiris calls the person addressed 'his beloved brother in the Lord.' That the formula 'in the Lord' belongs to 'brother' and not to 'greeting' is a conclusion that will probably meet with acceptance—though the third line is indented—in preference to the suggestion that it should be referred² to the latter word. The Christian, ever since the Apostle Paul conceived this wonderful symbol,

We are really unable to say whether Paul dated his letters at all, but in my opinion it is probable that he did so. Letters of the first century which have been preserved in the original do, as a matter of fact, commonly bear a date.

¹ Cp., e.g., Deissmann, *Bibelstudien*, p. 209 (not in the English translation).

² The *χαίρειν ἐν κυρίῳ* of Phil. iii. 1, iv. 4, is not to be thought of here.

'Brother in the Lord,' has seen in the combination something far too close to be destroyed by a space in the lines; and the epistolary word of salutation, 'Greeting!' handed down to us from antiquity, became too fixed to have been easily extended.

Our interest is more deeply excited when we find that the abbreviations of the words 'God' and 'Lord,' with which we are familiar from the MSS. of the Greek Bible, were evidently known to the writer of the letter (lines 3, 6, 22, and *verso*; not line 16). Here and there palæographic conclusions have been based upon these abbreviations which, in my opinion, have not been too well justified.¹ The letter in which we are interested supplies now a welcome contribution to the history of the abridgment. It shows that in a village in the Libyan Desert, remote from the world, these abbreviations were so well known that they could even be used in a private letter,

¹ Speaking of the abbreviations, C. R. Gregory very justly remarks (*Textkritik des Neuen Testaments*, i., Leipsic, 1900, p. 15): 'They afford no criterion for the age of the manuscripts, as was once wrongly supposed.'

and this at a period which, as we shall see, was, at any rate, before the oldest MSS. so far known to us were written. Now, since the presbyter in question is acquainted with the abbreviations from his Bible, we are able to say very definitely that MSS. of the Bible containing these abbreviations were to be found in Egypt at least as early as in the third century ; the Bible of Origen must have had them just as much as our famous uncial MSS.

So much with regard to the prescript (lines 1 to 3). Here we may already introduce a question connected with it : To what place was the letter written ? What was the dwelling-place of the presbyter Psenosiris, and where was that of the presbyter Apollon ? Place - names are not mentioned, but we can nevertheless gather further particulars. The leaf was found, as we have said, with the relics of the archives of the grave-diggers' guild of Kysis (= Dûsh el-Ḳal'a). It might therefore have been written in Kysis. This leaf would in that case be the draft. Examples are not want-

ing to which the leaf would then bear analogy. The Heidelberg papyrus collection possesses fragments which were derived, not from the letters sent, but from the copies retained. But line 8, 'here into the inner part,' would not suit this assumption at all. Kysis cannot have been called the inner part of the Great Oasis, as a glance at the map will show. Kysis was therefore the dwelling-place, not of Psenosiris, but of Apollon; and this leaf is not the copy, but the original letter which reached Kysis, and was there preserved amongst the fragments of writing belonging to the grave-diggers' guild. The place in which it was composed can only have been a spot situated north of Kysis, in the inner part. One would very much like to think of the ancient town to which the present chief town, El-Khargeh, corresponds; its important necropolis of early-Christian time has often been described by recent travellers.¹

¹ Cp. the books of travel mentioned above, note, p. 4. Olypiodorus in *Photius*, p. 61 a, 24 (cited by Gelzer, p. 140), knew of a wider application of the name 'Great Oasis.' He calls the Oasis El-Khargeh "Οασις μεγάλη ἡ ἐξωτέρω, and the Oasis Dachel, which lay to the west of

But we must advance with caution. We shall not ascertain the name of the place where Psenosiris served the Christian community as presbyter unless more inscriptions or papyri are discovered to help us better than our imagination does. This much, at any rate, we may say : the letter was written in the inner part of the oasis, and was forwarded thence to the village of Kysis, situated at its southern edge. There dwelt Apollon, the Christian presbyter.

The four lines that follow on the prescript —4 to 7—and for the most part the whole style of the letter, show that Psenosiris, as was only to be expected, knows and uses the epistolary phrases of his age. He is as little

it, "Οασις μεγάλη ἡ ἐσωτέρω. Even in the present day the two oases are described, as the names show, as *the outer* and *the inner* (Baedeker, p. 379). If this way of speaking is ancient, the letter under consideration might also have been written in the Oasis Dachel. In any case the place of composition was situated north or north-west of Kysis. A closer investigation of the statements of Olympiodorus will be found in R. Lepsius, 'Trinuthis und die ägyptischen Oasen,' *Zeitschr. für ägypt. Sprache u. Altertumskunde*, xii. (1874), pp. 80-83.

indebted to the Apostle Paul for the 'often-times greet' of line 4 *f.* (1 Cor. xvi. 19) as for the 'I would have thee know' of line 6 *f.* (cp. Phil. i. 12; 1 Cor. xi. 3); both Apostle and epigoni, it is better to assume, write the epistolary style of the Hellenistic world of the Mediterranean. It would be superfluous here to enumerate the many parallels from other papyrus letters to the formulæ and fixed phrases in this letter, as a comprehensive treatment of the whole material is to be expected from Dr. G. A. Gerhard, of Heidelberg.

'Formulæ indeed!' I can imagine someone exclaiming. 'Has Psenosiris no soul? Is he nothing more than a man of polite manners? Or was his idea merely to send his compliments to "all the brethren in the Lord"?' Surely not. His letter does not in other respects give us the impression of being a mere collection of polite phrases; it is a serious matter that he deals with in these hurriedly scribbled lines—nothing less, indeed, than the fate of a sister in the Lord: 'The grave-diggers have brought here into

the inner part Politike, who was sent into the oasis by the Government.'

Grenfell and Hunt have already conjectured that 'sent into the oasis' means much the same as 'banished into the oasis.' The present writer agrees with them. It is tempting to suppose that Psenosiris perhaps intentionally chose the mild and colourless expression 'sent,' even though 'to send into the oasis' does not exactly occur elsewhere as a technical expression for banishment.¹ Of

¹ *Constitution of the Emperor Justinian of the year 529 A.D., Codex Justinianus* (ed. P. Krueger, Berlin, 1877), IX., xlvii. 26 : τοὺς δὲ ἄρχοντας Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ Θηβαίδος κελεύει μόνους εἰς Γύψον καὶ εἰς Ὀασιν ἐκπέμπειν αὐτοὺς ἢ ἕως ἑξ μηνῶν ἢ τὸ μήκιστον ἕως ἐνιαυτοῦ. εἰ δὲ διηνεκὴς ἐστὶν ἢ ἐξορία, μήτε εἰς Γύψον πεμπέτωσαν μήτε εἰς Ὀασιν μήτε εἰς φυλακὴν ἐτέρας ἐπαρχίας. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, t. viii., p. 871 B, from Johannes Monachus : ἐξορίαν κατ' αὐτῶν ψηφίζεται (Emperor Julianus) καὶ πέμπει αὐτοὺς ἐν Ὀάσει τῆς Ἀραβίας. The technical expression in Greek elsewhere, as appears from other passages in the 'Constitution of Justinian,' which we have just quoted, is ἐξορίζειν, or even πέμπειν ἐν ἐξορίᾳ. The Latin technical usage is to be found in Th. Mommsen, *Römisches Strafrecht*, Leipsic, 1899, p. 964 ff. The common term is *relegare*, referring either to banishment or to internment. The most severe form of

the fact itself there can be no doubt. From the times of the Pharaohs down to the Roman and Byzantine Emperors the oases, and especially this Great Oasis, were used by those in authority as a place of banishment.¹ An inscription from Luxor of the year 1033 B.C. contains a prayer of the high priest of Amon to the god, begging for the return of those who had been sent to Egypt into the oasis.² A fragment has been handed down from Ulpian (ob. A.D. 228), which proves that banishment to the oasis was a means of expulsion from the province of Egypt in the time of the Empire.³ Through the con-

relegatio is the *deportatio*, while *relegare* and *deportare* are also used without any strict distinction. In the case under consideration the Latin term would indeed be *deportare* (cp. Mommsen, p. 975, note 2).

¹ Some examples are given in what follows. Fulness of proof is not aimed at. Cp. also the evidence in the preceding note, and especially the treatise of Joh. Val. Francke, *Ueber ein Einschießel Tribonians beim Ulpian, die Verbannung nach der grossen Oase betreffend*, Kiel, 1819.

² Brugsch-Bey, *op. cit.* (note, p. 4), p. 83 ff.

³ *Digesta*, XLVIII., xxii. 7: 'Est quoddam genus quasi in insulam relegationis in provincia Ægypto in Oasin relegare.'

trivance of the Arian Bishop George of Alexandria, in A.D. 356, several Catholic Christians, amongst them a virgin, were banished to the oasis.¹ Moreover, the 'Bishops of Egypt and of the two Libyas,' who were banished at the same time,² may well have been sent into the oases. In A.D. 396 Timasius, General of the Emperor Theodosius I., was similarly banished,³ and half a century later, under Theodosius II., Nestorius, the former Patriarch of Constantinople.⁴

¹ Socr., *Eccles. Hist.*, ii. 28: πάντας μὲν οὖν τοὺς περιλειφθέντας ἀθρόως καὶ τὴν παρθένον ἐξώρισαν (v. l. ἐξώρισεν) εἰς τὴν μεγάλην Ὀασιν.

² *Ibid.* Amongst them a bishop named Psenosiris (already mentioned in note, p. 14). According to *Acta Sanctorum Maii*, t. v., p. 29c (derived from Athanasius), most of them were sent into the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon, Ammonios into the 'upper'—that is to say, the Great Oasis.

³ Zosimus, v. 9 (Mendelssohn, p. 22), Τιμάσιος δὲ τῇ Ὀάσεως οἰκήσει παραδοθεὶς ἀπηλαύνετο.

⁴ Zonaras, xiii. 22 (Dindorf, iii., p. 240): καὶ ἀπηνέχθη ὁ δέιλαιος εἰς Ὀασιν, χώραν οὖσαν τῆς Ἀραβίας. Brugsch-Bey (*op. cit.*, p. 84) makes this notice refer, without quoting it at all, to the Great Oasis; in doing so he is, as a matter of fact, dependent upon Hoskins (p. 291).

In this case the banishment was effected by the Government. The word used by Psenosiris¹ indicates that the Governor has ordered the internment. The Governor (also called Eparchos) means the Imperial Prefect of Egypt. According to Roman penal law, he could not effect the internment 'as a form of punishment, but could only propose it to the Emperor';² but as regards confinement for an administrative purpose, 'in so far as the place of punishment

The geographical notice of Zonaras is at any rate not to be trusted. Nestorius himself in two letters to the *Præses* of the Thebaïd (in Evagr., *Eccles. Hist.*, i. 7) calls his place of banishment Ὀασιν τὴν καὶ Ἰβω, which is equivalent to Ὀάσεως τῆς Ἰβέως. This refers certainly to the Great Oasis, as, in fact, the Kysis papyri show. Cp. Grenfell and Hunt, p. 104.

¹ ἡγεμονία of the office of Prefect of Egypt occurs also, for example, in Eus., *Eccles. Hist.*, vii. 118: Αἰμιλιανὸς διέπων τὴν ἡγεμονίαν. I do not know whether ἡγεμονία can also denote the office of Governor of Upper Egypt (the Thebaïd). The Great Oasis belonged, at any rate for administrative purposes, to the Thebaïd. Cp. U. Wilcken, *Griechische Ostraka aus Aegypten und Nubien*, i., Leipsic and Berlin, 1899, p. 426.

² Mommsen, *Strafrecht*, p. 975.

is within the district,' his action is unfettered.¹ In the case of *Politike*, we are confronted with two possibilities: banishment was proclaimed by the Governor, either on the strength of an Imperial edict (and such an edict might spring from the Emperor's own initiative, though it could also be pronounced at the suggestion of the Governor), or was effected by him as an administrative measure.

Politike is one of the forgotten persons of whom aristocratic history takes no account. We may infer, however, that she was a free woman, perhaps also that she was not without means.² The first editors interpreted the word *politike* not as a proper name, but as the designation of a public prostitute; but

¹ Mommsen, *Strafrecht*, p. 975, note 6.

² Both conjectures are suggested by the practice in Roman penal law. Mommsen, p. 968: 'The *relegatio* could be carried out only in the case of free men.' *Ibid.*, p. 969: 'Internment . . . was not easily effected except in the case of people of the better class and of some means, on which account its employment in the penal decisions was usually confined to such persons, while people of a humbler class were condemned for similar offences to work in the mines.'

this idea is to be rejected. It is certainly quite true that the expression 'the public one' occurs in this sense.¹ In the present context, however, this meaning is not suitable. It is not very likely, to judge by the practice in Roman penal law,² that a prostitute would have been banished; nor did this idea seem to me any more plausible when I read that Rohlf's in 1874 found in Esneh a number of harlots who had been expelled from Cairo.³ What occasion could the presbyters of two communities of Christians and the Christian members of the grave-diggers' guild have for troubling themselves about the welfare of a wanton woman who was a stranger to them?

The situation in the letter itself demands at least the assumption that the banished person was a Christian woman, whether we

¹ The evidence is given in Du Cange, *Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediæ et Infimæ Græcitatæ*, i., Lugduni, 1688, p. 1195 f., under πολιτική. The 'Anonymus Combefianus in Lacapeno, num. 44,' cited there is Theophanes Continuatus, vi. 44 (p. 430, Bekker), cited by Grenfell and Hunt.

² See note 2, p. 27.

³ Rohlf's, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

take the disputed word as a proper name or not. If 'politike' is not a proper name, we might recall the many notices to the effect that during the persecutions of Christians many honourable women were forced into the public brothels.¹ It has been handed down, from Egypt in particular, that during the persecution under Diocletian and Maximinus Christian wives and saintly maidens were violently forced by the Prefect into houses of public resort.² On these martyrs the name Politikai might just as well have been fastened as the name Porphyriteis³ on those persons who were condemned to work at breaking porphyry stone.

This banished Christian woman, then, in whom we are interested, may, if we suppose that she had suffered that terrible fate, have been called *politike* without having been a

¹ The whole material is collected by Mommsen in *Strafrecht*, p. 955.

² Euseb., *De Mart. Pal.*, v. 3, and *Eccles. Hist.*, viii. 14₄ f.

³ This is found in the Syriac text of Eusebius's treatise on the Palestine martyrs. Cp. B. Violet in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, xiv. 4 (1896), p. 61.

politike. But we are still obliged to ask : Is it likely that those who shared the same faith would have applied this term of reproach to her ?

We are relieved of all improbabilities if we write the ' P ' large and take ' Politike ' as a proper name. Pape's book, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, already shows us that the word occurs also elsewhere for the time of the Empire as a name for women.¹ The inscriptions in the Latin *Corpus*, all of the time of the Empire, substantially add to the evidence, Politice often appearing as a

¹ The inscription there described as Orelli 4766 now appears in the *Inscriptiones Græcæ Siciliae et Italiae*, ed. G. Kaibel, Berlin, 1890, No. 1705 ; and in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* [CIL], vi., No. 20616. It stands upon a marble urn found in Rome, and runs :

D · M
IVLIA · POLITICE
DOESE
OSIRIS
TOPSYCRON
HYDOR

Kaibel transcribes the last lines thus : δοίη σοι Ὅσιρις τὸ ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ. But we ought, at any rate, to write δόη instead of δοίη.

cognomen,¹ but also as a distinct name;² and even though the present writer knows of no evidence at present for this name from Egypt,³ he has not the least doubt that the name was in common use. Derived as it was from the Greek-speaking world, it preserved its Greek ending even in Latin, as the inscriptions show. The lack of other Greek examples from Egypt is a mere accident in statistics.

Can we glean other details concerning the Christian woman Politike besides the fact of her banishment? From line 14 *f.* it appears that her son Neilos intends to journey to his

¹ From Italy, *CIL*, xiv. 628, Ostia, *Atiliæ Politices*; ix. 878 *l.*, Luceria, *Plautia v. l. Politice*; 5575, Septempeda, *Vibia Politice*; v. [1788 =] 8414, Aquileia, *Luciliæ Politice*; 4681 *l.*, Brixia, *Postumiæ P. lib. Politice*. From Gallia Narbonensis, xii. 717, Arelate, *Bædia Politice*; 828, Arelate, *Julia Politicæ*.

² From Italy, *CIL*, iv., all from Pompeii, 1832, 1915, 1930. From Gallia Narbonensis, xii., 2630, Genova (Geneva). From Spain, ii. 1,993, Abdera in Bætica.

³ The Julia Politice mentioned in the Roman inscription (note, p. 30), to whom Osiris is to pour out the cooling drink, need not, of course, be derived from Egypt.

mother. Where is the home of both? This question does not allow of an answer, but from indications in the letter itself we can infer the road the banished woman took before she found an asylum in the inner part of the oasis. The letter from Psenosiris to Apollon, the presbyter of Kysis, only explains itself satisfactorily if Apollon knew the companions in the faith; 'the Politike' means, perhaps, 'the particular Politike who is well known to you.' Politike must, therefore, before she travelled into the inner part of the oasis, have passed Kysis, and must there have asked help of the Christian presbyter. The grave-diggers then conduct her (thanks to the influence of Apollon) northward into the inner part to the community led by Psenosiris. Such are the events that must have preceded the letter. If, however, Politike travelled from south to north, she must have set foot upon the oasis in the south. It is therefore probable that she was brought from Syene, let us say, to the oasis. It seems, moreover, that Neilos purposed to journey to his mother past Kysis, therefore

likewise from south to north. Now, of the different routes leading from the Nile to the Great Oasis¹ it is the route which starts out from Syene (= Assuan — Kubânîye) that obliges the traveller to tread the oasis in the south and brings him straight to Kysis (= Dûsh el-Ḳal'a).

But perhaps we have inferred too much ; we do not wish to offer more than a suggestion.

From the practice in Roman penal law we may perhaps conjecture still further that Politike, as a banished person, had lost her possessions through confiscation,² but that within the oasis her freedom of movement was not restricted.³ And with this latter supposition the situation presupposed in the letter would agree. Politike was escorted to the dwelling-place of Psenosiris, not by the

¹ Cailliaud (p. 46) and Baedeker (p. 385) give the routes starting from north-east and east. The south-eastern routes are well shown on Cook's map. For our conjecture compare the journey of the Governor from Upper Egypt to Syene for the tracking out of Christians which is mentioned in note 2, p. 46 *f*.

² Mommsen, p. 957 *f*.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 976 and 971.

authorities, but by the grave-diggers. The authorities had the Christian woman conducted only to the oasis itself, if we may so assume, as far as Kysis ; from this point she could move freely within the oasis. She would seem to have attached herself to some members of the grave-diggers' guild of Kysis as they wandered into the inner part. Why the men made the journey we cannot tell ; perhaps for the purpose of transporting mummies,¹ perhaps on matters of business, or perhaps with the very intention of succouring the helpless. Our imagination certainly has the widest field in which to exercise itself. But it is very likely, as we have assumed above, that it was Apollon, the Christian presbyter of Kysis, who afforded the assistance ; as it is equally probable that the succourers were at least friendly in their feeling towards Christianity, for they bring the woman to the Christian presbyter Psenosiris, to whose community several members of the grave-diggers,

¹ Mention is made of a transportation of this kind, for instance, in the fine Kysis papyrus, No. 77 (Grenfell and Hunt, p. 121 f.).

guild of the place belong. Amongst these men, through the influence of Psenosiris, the poorest woman may find a shelter.¹ This news Psenosiris communicated to the brother in Kysis, and it is very reasonable to suppose that the succourers of Politike took his letter with them on their return to their dwelling-place, Kysis. The leaf seems to have been preserved amongst the fragments of writing belonging to the grave-diggers' guild of Kysis—another reason for supposing that here also within the guild Christianity had its adherents, as it had in the dwelling-place of Psenosiris.

These Christian grave-diggers in the inner part of the Great Oasis excite our interest in no small degree. The presbyter calls them, not Christians, but 'the good' (really 'the beautiful') 'and faithful.' Here we seem to have another instance in which a designation is intentionally chosen that is on the surface colourless; the letter might fall into the wrong hands, and Psenosiris, to be sure,

¹ Wilcken's reading in line 13 ἐξ αὐτῆς ('forthwith'), which must be assured, is more suitable grammatically than the first reading, ἐξ αὐτῶν.

would be familiar, from his New Testament, with that saying in Matt. x. 16—the word given to the disciples by the Master Himself expressly for a time of persecution. The non-Christian, on reading the words, would think of the old title of honour, ‘beautiful and good’; he would interpret it not as ‘good and faithful,’ but as ‘good and true.’¹ The Christian reader, however, would gather the true meaning at once—as readily, in fact, as he could understand the expression ‘the pure and holy men,’ which Dionysius of Alexandria² used of the martyrs of the Valerian persecution. It would appear from the words ‘the good and faithful among the grave-diggers’ that Christianity was professed, not by all the members of the guild in the dwelling-place of Psenosiris, but, at any rate, by a section of them. How was Christianity introduced into the oasis, so remote from the world, and how was it that it spread amongst the grave-diggers there? It is not too bold

¹ Like ἀγαθὴ καὶ πιστή in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. xxv. 21, 23).

² Euseb., *Eccles. Hist.*, vii. 10.

to conjecture that the first knowledge of Christ was brought into the Libyan Desert by banished Christians.¹ That, of all people, members of a grave-diggers' guild should have been impressed by the teaching is particularly easy to understand. Amongst these 'ancient gentlemen'² there can have been no lack of serious and thoughtful people to whom the new message had more to offer than the old faith had.

It was amongst these companions in the faith, then, that Politike, through the friend-

¹ In Euseb., *Eccles. Hist.*, vii. 11¹³, Dionysius of Alexandria speaks expressly of the great result of his missionary efforts among the heathen of his place of banishment in Libya. The Coptic legend makes the Apostles Bartholomew and Peter labour as missionaries in the oasis of Egypt; cp. *Synaxarium*, übers. von F. Wüstenfeld, I., Gotha, 1879, p. 6. The oldest references to the Christianity of the oases known to me are those given by E. Quatremère, *Recherches critiques et historiques sur la langue et la littérature de l'Égypte*, Paris, 1808, p. 217 ff. The evidence collected there does not seem to reach back farther than into the fourth century. In the Berlin *Sitzungsberichte*, 1901, p. 831, A. Harnack shows from the 'epistolæ festales' of Athanasius (ed. Larsow, p. 26) that there were Christians in the Great (and Small) Oasis in the year 329.

² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V. 1.

ship of Psenosiris, found a temporary shelter; and she must have experienced much kindness at their hands. Her son Neilos, who has set out after his mother, and is even now awaited,¹ is to tell Apollon very soon 'what they have done to her' (line 17 *f.*). This can hardly mean *what evil the persecutors have inflicted on her*, but *what good the brethren have done to her*.

Lines 18 and 19 have been seriously damaged. Our power to restore them we owe to the fact that, as they are the concluding lines of the letter, we are able to draw upon the fixed phrases of epistolary language as we find them elsewhere; we even find a sentence elsewhere which is so like one here that it might be mistaken for it.² Only the first four letters of line 19 are

¹ Psenosiris (or Politike) must have sent fuller particulars by letter to Neilos.

² Oxyrhynchus papyrus, 113₃₀ (second cent. A.D.) *περὶ δὲ καὶ σὺ ὧν θέλεις δήλου μοι ἡδέως ποιήσονται (sic) ἔρρωσο*. Line 27 above, *δήλωσόν μοι*. *δήλωσόν μοι* as a fixed phrase in letters occurs also in *Fayûm Towns and their Papyri*, 122₁₄ (circ. 100 A.D.). I have to thank Dr. Gerhard for referring me to the following letters among the Berlin documents: 248 (second cent. A.D.)₁₀ *δήλωσόν μοι*,₂₄ *δήλωσον δέ μοι*, 615 (second cent. A.D.)₂₈ *δήλωσόν*

still not completely assured. According to Kenyon,¹ the supplement $\kappa[\alpha\iota\ \sigma\upsilon]$ —which, as a matter of fact, fits the text excellently and, to judge by the photograph also, is graphically not impossible—does not seem to be confirmed by the original; there the letter which follows the κ seems to be a ν , which makes us conjecture $\kappa\upsilon[\rho\iota\epsilon]$. In spite of the address ‘brother,’ ‘lord’ would certainly be conceivable² as an attestation of respect, but the present writer cannot help thinking the other supplement more suitable. In any case the sense is assured: Psenosiris offers to do for Apollon all the favours that may be in any way acceptable to him.

The conclusion of the letter is the usual one, only Christianized by the words ‘in the Lord God.’ Similarly, the address on the back bears, as though for a seal, the words ‘in the Lord.’

μοι, similarly 384₆ (second to third cent. A.D.), as also in the Abinnaïos letters (circ. 346 A.D.) of the Geneva Papyri: 50, καὶ [πε]ρὶ ὧν βούλει κέ[λε]νέ μοι, κύριε ἀδελφέ, ἡδέως ἔχοντι, and 55, περὶ δὲ ὧν εἶπον, κέλευέ μοι ἡδέως ποιῶντι.

¹ Cp. p. 9, above.

² Cp. ‘My lord brother’ in the Abinnaïos letter, 50, quoted in note 2, pp. 38 and 39.

IV

DATE OF THE LEAF

As we have already seen (p. 1 *ff.*), this leaf was discovered together with other papyri belonging to the grave-diggers of the Great Oasis. Most of these other papyri have been dated. The following are the years to which they have been assigned: Sayce's fragments III. and IV. to 242 A.D.; Sayce V. and Grenfell and Hunt 71 to some year between 244 and 249 A.D.; Grenfell and Hunt 68 to 247 A.D.; Sayce I. to 249 A.D.; an unnumbered fragment of Sayce's (mentioned after VI.) to some year between 254 and 259 A.D.; Grenfell and Hunt 69 to 265 A.D.; 70 to 269 A.D.; 72 to one of the years 290, 293, 299, 303, or 304 A.D.; 74 to 302 A.D.; 75 to 305 A.D.; 76 to 305-6 A.D.;

Sayce II. to 304, 305, or 306 A.D. ; Grenfell and Hunt 78 to 307 A.D. It will be seen that the leaves which are shown by their contents to be related are all derived, so far as they have been dated, from the period (to take a round number) between 240 and 310 A.D. It is very unlikely that the few which have not been dated, Sayce VI., Grenfell and Hunt 73 (the leaf we are considering) and 77, should be placed either much earlier than 240 A.D., or much later than 310 A.D.¹ The most obvious suggestion is rather that they, too, were written between these two limits.

If the leaf under consideration carries us back to, let us say, the time between 240 and 310 A.D., and treats, as its contents would indicate, of a Christian woman banished by the Government, it should be referred to one of the Christian persecutions under the Emperors Decius, Gallus, Valerian, Diocletian, or his successors till 313 A.D. At any

¹ Grenfell and Hunt 77 should very likely be referred to the time of Diocletian ; cp. the remarks of the editors, p. 121.


rate, we know nothing of other persecutions within that limit.

Now, are we in a position to fix upon a particular persecution? Thanks to recent discoveries of papyri, we possess in the original, as is well known, several libelli relating to the persecution under Decius; but we are not justified in carrying this leaf so far back—not, that is to say, if with Grenfell, Hunt, and Kenyon we have correctly read the name of the presbyter of Kysis as *Apollon*.

Wilcken,¹ on the strength of his reading of the photograph, came to the conclusion that the name must be read *Apollonios*. Now, in the Kysis papyrus, Grenfell and Hunt 71, which was written as early as the time of the Emperor Philip (between 244 and 249 A.D.), in line 4 of the second column mention is made of an Apollonios, son of Ammonios the presbyter.² This might mean *Apollonios, son of Ammonios*

¹ Cp. above, p. 8.

² The papyrus has Απολλωνιω Αμμωνιω πρεσβυτερον, which is a slip of the pen for Απολλωνιου Αμμωνιου πρεσβυτερον.

senior, but might also be understood as *Presbyter Apollonios, son of Ammonios*.¹ Supposing the second meaning to be correct, might we venture to identify this person with the one addressed in our letter? In that case, certainly, we should have to go back to the time of the Emperors Decius, Gallus and Valerian, rather than to the beginning of the fourth century. But, even if the person addressed in this letter was called *Apollonios*, the present writer would not be so bold as to make out the identification; the meaning *senior* in Papyrus 71 still appears to him more probable. We do not find a clue to lead us on the right path even in the other Kysis papyri. Nor do we glean any information relevant to our purpose when we find the sign  on the margin of Papyrus 69 (of the year 265 A.D.), as it is not, in this case, the Christian symbol.² We are obliged,

¹ On the other hand, the meaning could not be *Apollonios senior, son of Ammonios*.

² The editors take it to be a symbol for the word χρηματισμῶ, which stands in the line in question. The same symbol also occurs elsewhere for ἐκατόνταρχος—e.g. Grenfell and Hunt, Papyrus II. 62 (Faîyûm, 211 A.D.);

therefore, to give up the idea of assigning the letter of Psenosiris to the time of Decius (as regards the persecution, too, that continued under Gallus, we do not know where to halt).

But this being so, we may still think seriously of the Valerian persecution (after 257 A.D.). In this connection statements on the part of contemporaries, which we may suppose to be trustworthy, come to our assistance. We know, for instance, through Cyprian,¹ that Valerian actually published an edict which decreed the banishment of Christian matrons and confiscation of their possessions; we learn, further,

in the Aristotle papyrus, and in scrolls from Herculaneum for $\chi\rho\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$; in magical papyri for $\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\epsilon$ (F. G. Kenyon, *The Palæography of Greek Papyri*, Oxford, 1899, p. 155); in medical papyri for $\chi\rho\hat{\omega}$ (C. Kalbfleisch, *Papyri Argentoratenses Græcæ*, Lektionskatalog, Rostock, 1901, Summer, p. 8).

¹ Ep. 82, *rescripsisse Valerianum ad senatum, ut episcopi et presbyteri et diacones in continenti animadvertantur, senatores vero et egregii viri et equites Romani dignitate amissa etiam bonis spolientur et si ademptis facultatibus Christiani esse perseveraverint, capite quoque multentur, matronæ ademptis bonis in exilium relegentur.*

through Dionysius of Alexandria,¹ that when the Governor of Egypt pronounced against him and other Christians a sentence of banishment, he based his claim to choose the place of exile upon an express command of Valerian and Gallien.

We possess similar items of information with regard to the persecution that started under Diocletian and his successors (after the year 303)—we give it here its popular name ‘Diocletian.’ When we hear of an Alexandrian woman, a Christian,² being punished by Maximinus with banishment, in addition to confiscation of her possessions, we may be sure that this is only one instance out of many. We are told, again, of the banishment of Egyptian Christians during the Diocletian persecution in the legends of the

¹ In Euseb., *Eccles. Hist.*, vii. 11₁₀, Αἰμιλιανὸς διέπων τὴν ἡγεμονίαν αὐτοῖς εἶπεν· ὁρῶ ὑμᾶς ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀχαρίστους ὄντας καὶ ἀναισθήτους τῆς πραότητος τῶν σεβαστῶν ἡμῶν. διόπερ οὐκ ἔσσεσθε ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, ἀλλὰ ἀποσταλήσεσθε εἰς τὰ μέρη τῆς Λιβύης καὶ ἐν τόπῳ λεγομένῳ Κεφρώ· τοῦτον γὰρ τὸν τόπον ἐξελεξάμην ἐκ τῆς κελεύσεως τῶν σεβαστῶν ἡμῶν.

² Euseb., *Eccles. Hist.*, viii. 14₁₅.

Coptic Christians dealing with the saints.¹ In this case we may certainly have our doubts about the historicity of particular cases, but we need not suppose the popular memory to have been at fault, in so far as it recollected that deportation was one of the punitive measures employed in this persecution. The same remark applies to the notice in the fragment relating to the martyrdom of Saint Theonoë,² to the effect that

¹ Synaxarium, ed. Wüstenfeld, i., p. 293 : Justus is sent by the Governor to Upper Egypt. In a fragment in Aug. Ant. Georgius, 'De miraculis Sancti Coluthi et reliquiis actorum Sancti Panesniv martyrum Thebaica fragmenta duo . . .', Romæ, 1793, p. xc, we are told of the banishment of a Christian, Isaac, by Culcianus ; for a case of banishment by the Governor Armenius see Amélineau in the work cited below, p. 140.

² Georgius, p. 240. The name of the saint is pronounced not Theone, as it is written on p. 212, but Theonoë, as on p. 242. The Governor called Culcianus in this fragment, who appears elsewhere also in the martyr-texts edited by Georgius (p. lxxxviii ff. ; cp. also the *Tabula Chronologica Imperatorum, Præsidium, et Martyrum Ægypti*, p. cxxxvii ff., and Amélineau in the work cited below, p. 67 f. and often), has been treated of by Hans Achelis, *Die Martyrologien : ihre Geschichte und ihr Wert* (*Abhandlungen der Kgl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, N.F., No. 3), Berlin, 1900,

under Diocletian the Governor Culcianus published an Imperial edict in Alexandria promising honours to those Christians who offered sacrifice to the Imperial deities, but threatening with severe punishments those who refused to sacrifice—the men with death, *their wives and children with banishment to remote regions, in addition to confiscation of the property left by the husband.*

p. 174 ff., and by Carl Schmidt in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, N.F., v. 4 b (1901), p. 47 ff. He is probably mentioned in the Amherst papyrus 83 (Faiyûm, unfortunately not dated). The Kysis papyrus 78 (Grenfell and Hunt, ii., p. 123 ff.) supplies us further with one of the Prefects of Egypt desiderated by Schmidt (p. 50) between 303 and 313: Satrius Arrianus is ἡγεμὼν in 307 A.D. A Governor of Upper Egypt under Diocletian, Arianus by name, is mentioned in *Synaxarium*, p. 141; an *Arianus*, *præses Thebaidos*, by Georgius, p. clxii and often. He appears very frequently among the martyrs spoken of by E. Amélineau, *Les Actes des Martyrs de l'Église Copte*, Paris, 1890, cp. pp. 20-63. The information on p. 45 to the effect that he extended his journey for the tracking out of Christians as far as Syene is particularly interesting. The Coptic Christians tell us that in the end Arianus was converted, and died a martyr in Antioch (p. 63). Is this Arianus identical with the ἡγεμὼν of the Kysis papyrus?

Another instance may be added, in conclusion. Amongst the horrors (with which we are so familiar) of the Diocletian persecution we must include the transportation of Egyptian Christians to the stone-quarries and mines, which is described by Eusebius in his treatise on the Palestinian martyrs. Judging by the practice in Roman penal law, already touched on above,¹ we may suppose that these condemned persons belonged really to the lower classes; the corresponding punishment for persons of higher standing was deportation.

For which of the two persecutions are we to decide? Had the letter been handed down to us as a piece of literature—as a fragment, let us say, of a history of martyrs—it would be very hard to give an answer. We might at best say as follows: the letter shows that at the time in which it was composed Christianity already played a part by no means insignificant in the Great Oasis; in several places there were organized com-

¹ Note 2, p. 27.

munities. Now, as we have already supposed,¹ the first propagators of the new faith in this region so remote from the world must have been banished Christians. The Valerian persecution, therefore, with its many deportations, carried out on the strength of an Imperial edict, more readily suggests itself than earlier persecutions, with their banishments that happened only occasionally. Above all others, therefore, the Valerian age deserves to be considered when the *origin* of the Christian communities of the oases is in question ; and that being so, the letter under consideration would belong to the time of the persecution under Diocletian.

It may be that new discoveries will throw fresh light on the beginnings of the communities in the oases. Up to the present explorers have, unfortunately, for the most part shown little interest in the Christian relics of this district, though there are indications in the accounts of their travels that a

¹ Page 37, especially note 1, which refers to the Valerian persecution.

rich Christian life must have flourished there in ancient times. Even at the present day the traveller who takes an interest in matters relating to Christianity finds without trouble early-Christian inscriptions which, when he publishes the results of his expedition, are not even mentioned.¹ If we only consider the great early-Christian city of the dead in the chief town of the oasis, with its many inscriptions in Greek and Coptic, what great results might be expected from Christian archæology if only archæologists set to work on a definite plan! Brugsch Bey, who has seen and briefly described these inscriptions,² supposes them to be the work of the

¹ I have to thank Herr Kumm for the copy of an unpublished Christian inscription from the same temple in Kysis (= Dûsh el-Ḳal'a), which bears the inscription of Marcus Rutilius Lupus (above, note 2, p. 3); it stands in red letters in the 'Chorraum'; traces of hieroglyphics can also be discerned. I refrain from publishing it here, because the text brings the editor of it face to face with several questions which would require to be answered at some length.

² Page 59 ff. The posthumous work of W. de Bock (ob. May, 1899), *Matériaux pour servir à l'archéologie de l'Égypte chrétienne. Avec xxxiii planches en phototypie*

oldest Christian inhabitants of the oasis; in accordance with the old Egyptian custom, the dead were still embalmed and wrapped up, partly, perhaps we may add, by the hands of Christians such as those among whom Politike found a shelter.¹ However, we need not fix our hopes upon future discoveries alone. What we cannot ascertain for certain from the text of the letter we can

et 100 dessins dans le texte, St. Petersburg, 1901 (a Russian text is given throughout in the left-hand column), only became known to me after I had written the above lines. W. de Bock undertook two journeys in order to study the ancient Christian memorials of Egypt—1888-89 and 1897-98. The results have been published by J. S[tasoff] and W. G[olenischeff] in the above-mentioned work, from the sketches of De Bock. A large portion of De Bock's investigations relate to the Christian memorials in the north-east of the Great Oasis, especially to those of the ancient Christian necropolis. The abundance of the early Christian paintings here presented to us is particularly surprising. Unfortunately, the inscriptions are reproduced only to a very small extent. In those published, I have failed to find anything which could help us forward in our investigation. The ruins of Kysis (= Dûsh el-Kal'a) are not mentioned.

¹ Schweinfurth, *op. cit.* (note, p. 4), p. 387, ventures to suggest as 'the principal time for the origin of the necropolis' the fourth to eighth centuries A.D.

discover, with at least a certain amount of probability, by a study of the character of the writing, which has been preserved to us in the exact original.

The science of palæography as regards the Greek papyri is quite in its infancy ; but, thanks to the many hundreds of dated fragments from the Greek millennium of Egypt, it has command of unusually reliable material by which to control its discoveries. In this domain the importance to be attached to the decisions of experts is totally different from that which we may ascribe to the dating of the Greek Uncial MSS. of the Bible as determined by the pre-papyrological palæographers, although it is obvious that in particular cases experts, too, may be liable to error.

There are three views among specialists ; we have to make our choice of one of them. Grenfell and Hunt, in their first edition, thought of the end of the third century, or, as they also say, of the reign of Diocletian. This view is of special importance, because its adoption was uninfluenced by the explana-

tion of the leaf as a document relating to a persecution of Christians.

Wilcken, in a verbal discussion, thought that, on the strength of the photograph, he could assent to this decision ; but on November 2, 1901, he informed me in a written communication that, so far as he recollected, it would be possible, on palæographical considerations as well, to move the papyrus farther back—to the Decian persecution.¹

Kenyon, in a written communication on November 4, 1901, after collating the original, announced it as his opinion that the writing is to be referred to the age of Diocletian.

Thus the verdict of palæographic discussion is inclined to pronounce in favour of the time of Diocletian—the same time that we were able to suggest, if not to prove, on the ground of internal evidence. This date may, after all, be wrong ; but, even so, the error would not be one to be very deeply deplored.

¹ Wilcken reckoned with this possibility when he supposed that the person addressed in the letter was called Apollonios, and is identical with the Apollonios of another Kysis papyrus (cp. above, p. 42).

The value of the leaf increases if, instead of the Diocletian persecution, we have to think of the Valerian, or of a still earlier one : it would come to us with a greeting from an age compared with which ours is poor—from the great days of Cyprian and Origen.

V

RETROSPECT

AMONGST the dwellers in the Libyan oases an idea prevails that Europeans, by copying ancient inscriptions, obtain control over hidden treasures, to which a clue is therein found.¹ Have we in this leaf, with its ancient text from the oases, discovered a hidden treasure?

Sixteen hundred years ago in Egypt a Christian woman, Politike, stood before one of the highest officials in the kingdom. Like many others, she was called upon, by command of the Emperor, to make choice between two courses of action: she must either do what was required of every loyal subject, offer sacrifice to the Genius of the

¹ Rohlfs, p. 278 *f*.

Emperor, or a terrible punishment awaits her—confiscation of her possessions and banishment to the desert. Consent means a trifling act; refusal involves a woeful experience. Politike has to decide one way or the other. How many have brought the required offering and thus saved themselves from the awful alternative? How many have allowed themselves to be moved to at least an outward concession? Which course will she take? She is bound fast to the present life by the firm links of a mother's love. Ought she to abandon her son Neilos? or should she give way to the pressure of the officer and fulfil the command, as a mere formality, in order to return to her own home, a free woman? What the hypocrite regards as a trifling matter the honest soul feels to be an insurmountable obstacle. Politike has a conscience.

Banishment or . . .? No; rather an offence against the earthly lord than an apostasy from the living God and His Son! We must obey God rather than men—so it is written; and, again: 'What help is it to

a man if he gain the whole world and yet harm his own soul? Everyone who forsakes children or fields or houses for My name's sake, he shall receive back an hundredfold and inherit eternal life.'

Politike has refused to sacrifice; the sentence of the officer has taken its course. She tears herself away from household and belongings, from her son Neilos, and follows the soldiers deputed to transport her. Will she ever set eyes upon her child again? Will Neilos be able to follow his mother into exile?

They reach Syene, take a hurried farewell of the eternal river—the river Politike loved so well that her son was named after it—and then a little caravan moves westwards into the barren land, the bare tops of whose hills are traced in sharp outlines in the evening sky—the desert! The desert with its parching heat and bleaching bones unfolding a tale of robbers, murder, and the malice of demons! And what, forsooth, will happen when, all these terrors passed, they arrive at the oasis? Who will trouble

about a woman without means? Who will understand her language and sympathize with her holiest thoughts? Will anyone be found to give her for the work of a giant the rations of a slave?

The sun has set and risen six times; but the days have brought Politike a single comfort, a rest at the well of the oasis which lies half-way, otherwise nothing but privation and hardships. The tortures of the journey in the desert are becoming intolerable to men and beasts alike, when the flagging horses toss their heads knowingly, and the guides point towards the western horizon. On a hill in the distance appear outlines of buildings and of trees; then, on a nearer view, green meadows, fountains of water, houses, huts, and palms, women and children moving about quickly, and, crowning the hill, the proud castle, its walls enclosing a temple of the gods enriched with pictures and inscriptions—Kysis in the Great Oasis!

The soldiers make their report to the captain of the castle; their commission is discharged; Politike is free—free, but in a

world of strangers. But she has hardly had time to realize fully her position in all its desolation, when through the crowd of gazers there approaches her a man whom they call Apollon, whispers a watchword—a precious, holy name—and leads her to his house. Here she hears as in a dream Greek accents, words of comfort and consolement spoken by Christian brothers and sisters. They tell her how that in an earlier age, when a like storm swept over Christendom, the Gospel was brought here to Kysis by banished Christians, and how that even among the heathen in the oasis it found hearers ready to believe. How that in the good grave-diggers' guild, where it was long ago the custom to call the companions *brother*, there were now several members who believed in the Christ. How that farther on in the inner part of the oasis there existed a still larger community—there, they assure her, she will feel herself at home again; thither Apollon, the presbyter of Kysis, will have her conducted to the presbyter Psenosiris.

An opportunity soon offers itself. Mem-

bers of the grave-diggers' brotherhood have to make one of their solemn journeys into the inner part. They take with them Politike, now restored to life and hope, and conduct her safely to Psenosiris, the presbyter of the Christian community in the inner part of the oasis. And for this stranger, his sister in the Lord, Psenosiris knows well where to find the right hosts. In his community are Christian grave-diggers, and to these 'good and faithful ones' he can intrust Politike with a calm conscience until that her son Neilos, for whose arrival she now once more dares to hope, be come to his mother. Apollon was not mistaken in Psenosiris, nor did Psenosiris trust to his Christians in vain. The grave-diggers' families, to whose care Politike was forthwith entrusted, treated the banished woman with the utmost kindness. And it is of this that Psenosiris, with a joyfulness that is not without a touch of pride, sends his brother Apollon tidings in a letter.

This letter we possess, and we have it in the original : we can take the papyrus in our

hands, we can read the handwriting of Psenosiris with our own eyes.

Have we, then, by the possession of this letter gained control over a hidden treasure? I propose to answer this question, not for the sake of the mere dealer in antiquities, but for the scholar.

What are our sources for the knowledge of the Christian persecutions in the Roman State? We possess Acts of Martyrs, authentic, unauthentic, and partly authentic; we have the letters of noted champions of the faith, and the narratives of the writers of history and of stories. We are confronted with an impenetrable thicket of luxuriating legend. There is certainly no lack of sources, and year by year new ones are disclosed. But everywhere, even in the most highly reputed Acts of Martyrs, we are referred back to tradition. This tradition is, we admit, in many cases excellent; and a close investigation even of those texts from Egypt that have such a flavour of romance about them will, if it is supported by an intimate acquaintance with the state of things in

Roman Egypt, succeed in gleaning here and there a good grain even in the chaff.

So that, as far as the material for investigation is concerned, we did not lack resource. What we did lack were original documents.

What is it essentially that makes the original of so much importance to us? It is this. The original carries us back, not to tradition about the past, but to the actual past itself. It places us in direct contact with the very object of investigation. The autograph not only engages the critical faculty—it also speaks to the soul of the inquirer with a softer but clearer voice, and gives wings to divination. Who will be annoyed with the reader of the autograph when he tries to read in the strokes of the writing, or between the lines, what could be discerned when the leaves were studied in their own home, under their own sky?

The Egyptian discoveries¹ of the last

¹ The very important discovery of the inscription of Arykanda (ed. Th. Mommsen, *Archäol.-Epigr. Mitteil-*

decade have presented us with originals of the time of the Christian persecutions, such as a first specimen of a libellus relating to the Decian persecution,¹ and a second.² Now they offer us—as though to compensate us for the sorrow with which we were obliged to regard the documents of perfidy—a leaf which treats of a Christian confessor, and which shows that in a most forlorn corner on the extremest southern border of the known world the Gospel had forced an entrance,

ungen aus Oesterreich, xvi., 1893, p. 93 ff.) may also be mentioned here, although the two texts of this inscription are not the originals in the strict sense of the word.

¹ F. Krebs, *Ein Libellus eines Libellaticus vom Jahre 250 n. Chr. aus dem Faijûm*, in *Sitzungsberichte der Kgl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1893, p. 1007-1014; cp. A. Harnack, *Theol. Lit.-Zeitung*, xix. (1894), col. 38-41.

² K. Wessely, *Ein Libellus eines Libellaticus aus dem Faijûm*, in *Anzeiger der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien, Philosophisch-Historische Classe*, xxxi. (1894), pp. 3-9; cp. A. Harnack, *Theol. Lit.-Zeitung*, xix. (1894), col. 162 f. I do not know whether this libellus, found in the papyrus collection of Archduke Rainer, is identical with 'Akt betr. eine Christenverfolgung' of the same collection (*Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1884, No. 163, p. 2398, and *Philolog. Anzeiger*, 1884, p. 478).

and in what way the Christians there fulfilled the word of their Master: 'I was a stranger, and ye took Me in.'

Certainly, we have to do in this leaf, not with a highly commemorated saint, but with a person quite unknown—a woman forgotten for fifteen hundred years; nor was the letter written by a famous patriarch in a busy town of the world, but by the unskilled hand of some elder of a congregation in the desert. And it is obvious that the few hurriedly scribbled lines relate to one of those small matters for the sake of which history is not wont to keep its archives.

But does not the particular value of the leaf in question consist in this very circumstance? 'The farther back into the past we transport ourselves, the more scanty do such sources become, the more carefully must every relic of the culture of that time be turned to the best advantage for the purpose we have in view. It is in this way that we accumulate, by quiet, unassuming work—work removed from the struggle for law and orthodoxy—the foundation-stones for

a history of the Church, not indeed of the official Church, often rather of the unofficial, yet always of the Church, if we mean by it Christianity—proofs of its elasticity, of its inexhaustible power of adapting itself, of transforming itself, of bending to the lowly and of ennobling the commonplace.’

These are the words of the Rector of the University of Marburg.¹ I venture to quote them in reference to the Politike papyrus.

The papyrus is old enough for our purpose. If we are right in our calculations, it belongs to the beginning of the fourth century (even earlier, if we have miscalculated its chronology) ; so that, apart from a letter from Rome to the Fayûm,² it is the oldest *original letter that has so far been transmitted to us from the hand of a Christian*.

¹ A. Jülicher, *Moderne Meinungsverschiedenheiten über Methode Aufgaben und Ziele der Kirchengeschichte* (Marburger akademische Reden, 1901, No. 5), Marburg, 1901, p. 23.

² *The Amherst Papyri*, Part I., London, 1900, No. III. a, p. 28 ff., and Part II., London, 1901, plate 25 ; cp. A. Harnack, *Sitzungsberichte der Kgl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1900, p. 987 ff.

But this insignificant papyrus affords us yet another reason for congratulation: *it is a proof of Christianity's inexhaustible power of bending to the lowly and of ennobling what is commonplace.*

THE END

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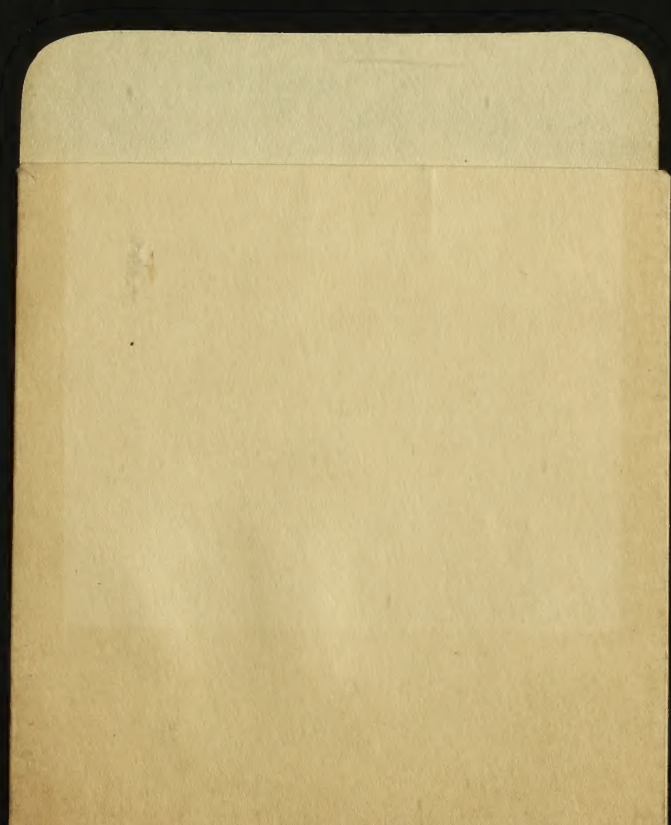
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